

## Test your environmental IQ

By SHERRY DEVLIN of the Missoulian newspaper

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Don't worry if you miss a few, because most do. Sharpen your pencil. Keep your eyes on your own newspaper. And see how you fare on the test given by researchers to thousands of college students and millworkers – and now to Montanans.

Don't worry if you miss a few. You're in the majority. Here's the test:

1. Is the following statement true or false?  
The United States is a net exporter of most raw materials used by industry today.
2. Which one of the six most common building materials can be produced with the least impact on the environment?  
Would it be: brick, concrete, aluminum, steel, wood or plastic?
3. The area covered by forests in the United States today is approximately how much of the land that was covered by forests in the 1600s?  
About 20 percent, 50 percent, 70 percent or 100 percent.
4. Is the following statement true or false?  
Excluding Alaska, the United States has more forested area today than in 1920.
5. Which of the following three statements about United States forest production is correct?  
Annual forest harvest exceeds net growth of new wood.  
Annual forest harvest about equals net growth of new wood.  
Annual forest harvest is less than the net growth of new wood.
6. What percentage, by weight, of the total amount of paper used in the United States last year was recovered for reuse?  
Would you say it was less than 10 percent, 20-30 percent, 40-50 percent or 60-70 percent?
7. What percentage of the fiber used to produce U.S. paper last year came from recovered paper?  
Would you say it was about 5 percent, 20 percent, 40 percent or 60 percent?

**Now the answers, as provided by Jim Bowyer, the University of Minnesota professor who first gave the test to his students:**

1. False. The United States is a net importer of every category of industrial raw material: metals, cements, petroleum and wood.
2. Wood is Bowyer's answer, although he concedes that this question has no clear right or wrong response.  
His explanation: If you consider the entire life cycle, as well as the energy consumption and pollution related to extraction and manufacture, wood can be produced with significantly lower environmental impacts than any other commonly used building material.

3. U.S. forests today cover an area equal to about 70 percent of that covered by presettlement forests.
4. True. The area covered by U.S. forests increased over the past decade by about 4.6 million acres. Only 3.3 percent of U.S. forestland has been converted to other uses over the past 30 years, and almost all of the loss was caused by urban expansion and infrastructure development. The greatest causes of forest loss in modern times have been construction of new highways and reservoirs.
5. The net yearly growth in U.S. forests exceeds harvest by 31 percent. In fact, Bowyer said, growth has exceeded forest harvest for each of the past 40 years.
6. Forty-eight percent of the paper used in the United States last year was recycled.
7. Recycling yields more than 38.6 million tons of wastepaper a year for reuse by pulp mills, or about 40.3 percent of domestic production. Of the paper recovered, 30 million tons are reused by U.S. paper mills and 8.6 million tons are exported to foreign markets.